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**THE
FALLACY
OF
“FREE FOOD”**

The TARIFF
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High Cost of Living

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Fallacy of "Free Food"

The Tariff Not a Contributing Cause to the High Cost of Living

That people believe what they wish to believe, was never better illustrated than in the spectacle of a presumably responsible section of the press and public of Canada lending their support to Sir Wilfrid Laurier's latest fiscal policy, namely, "Free Food."

The very words, "free food" insinuate themselves into one's consciousness without challenge from the understanding. Life at best is a struggle; and to maintain one's self in the human procession, requires vigilance, self-denial, and arduous toil. To be relieved from the forces that bear down so hard upon humanity means an easier lot. And so ardent is the wish for this immunity that many do not stop to inquire whether the schemes devised and put forward for the purpose, really do afford immunity or relief. Analysis is waived, the facts unchallenged, and the conclusion accepted.

Who that has a wife and loved ones to support, could wish other than free food?

Who that is dependent upon the labour of his hands or brain, does not want to see the burden of the high price of the necessities of life reduced?

The Fallacy of "Free Food" Exposed

Is not this solicitude of the white plumed chieftain, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, for the downtrodden masses, beautiful?

Does it not warm the heart, and tend to revive one's faith in the innate goodness of man?

Yet there are tens of thousands who question its sincerity; and tens of thousands more who question, not only its sincerity, but its efficacy and its wisdom.

These thousands are asking whether the abolition of the customs duties on food-stuffs will really mean a lowering of the cost of living.

To answer that question is to lay bare the fallacy, the hollowness and insincerity, of Laurier's seductive cry of "free food."

THE TARIFF BEARS NO RELATION TO THE COST OF LIVING

"Free Food" when reduced to a practical basis, means the total abolition of customs duties upon all commodities which go to make up the consumer's dinner table, and which we in Canada import from foreign countries, or from any other portion of the Empire. To claim that the wiping out of those duties will result in lowering the price of food-stuffs, is to claim that the tariff is responsible for present high prices. Unless you can prove the latter claim, the former is fundamentally false and illogical. It is therefore plain to every reasonable mind, that, before asking the country to accept his cure, it becomes the duty of Sir Wilfrid Laurier to properly diagnose our case, and prove to us that the root of our economic ills, is the tariff.

Has Sir Wilfrid done this?

Has he given a solitary reasonable reason, why at this stage of our development, we should depart from the path of the National Policy, upon which we have found unbounded prosperity?

The Fallacy of "Free Food" Exposed

Upon what does he base his theory that the only remedy for the high cost of living, is the abolition of what he is pleased to call "Food Taxes"?

A THEORY WITHOUT BASIS IN FACT

He surely does not base it upon the history of tariff reductions, for the results from these are squarely and unmistakably opposed to such a view. Britain has had Free Trade for more than sixty years, and yet the cost of living in the United Kingdom is going up by leaps and bounds. Holland and Denmark are comparatively low tariff countries, yet they pay more for their food-stuffs than do the people of high protectionist countries like Germany and France. Free Trade in England was followed by a brief wave of prosperity, and then by business depression, and unprecedented poverty. Germany established Protection, and it was followed by an increase of business, an advance in wages, and a raising in the standard of living that has continued until this day.

He surely cannot base it upon the history of fiscal science, for the truth is that the theory that the abolition of the customs tariff will lower prices and better the condition of the masses, has been tried, found wanting, and long ago discarded by practically every nation worthy of the name in Europe.

And is it reasonable to suppose that if the tariff is responsible for the high cost of living, that the economic thinkers of practically every civilized country on the face of the earth would almost unanimously dismiss it as an absolutely negligible factor?

DEMOCRATIC POLICY OF TARIFF REDUCTION

A RIDICULOUS FAILURE

But lest European countries be too far advanced for the purpose of argument, let the question be asked, Why is it, that the

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abolition of food duties failed to lower the cost of living in the United States?

Here we have A CERTAIN AND INFALLIBLE CONDEMNATION OF THE NEW LIBERAL POLICY. Ever since the Civil War the Americans have maintained a high tariff wall. Their customs duties upon food-stuffs have averaged nearly forty-five per cent., or nearly fifty per cent. greater than the present Canadian duties. For years past the Democratic party has been holding out Free Trade as a panacea for the economic ills of the country. The Baltimore platform of Bryan and Wilson pledged the party absolutely to the abolition of all duties on the necessities of life, with a view to the reduction of the high cost of living. The upheaval in the Republican ranks gave the Free Traders their opportunity, and although in a minority, the Democrats found themselves in office. They introduced, by way of keeping their pledges, what is known as the Simmons-Underwood tariff, which levelled the duties upon all food-stuffs entering the country. In other words it gave to the United States, the "free food" which Sir Wilfrid Laurier is advocating for Canada.

THE COST OF LIVING INCREASED.

What has been the result?

The result has been that in the three months since this new tariff policy has been in force, the cost of living in the United States has not only not decreased, but has actually increased at as great a rate as during any equal period of time during the past ten or fifteen years.

This experience of the people of the United States, with this policy of "free food," is sufficient in itself to damn Sir Wilfrid's latest scheme to entice the unthinking voter to his support. And it is not surprising that such great newspapers as the New York "Evening Post," "The Sun," "The Tribune" and "The American" have been mercilessly exposing the

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fallacy of such a policy, and scornfully referring to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the Liberal leader, as "an accomplished opportunist."

CANADIAN TARIFF HAS BEEN STATIONARY FOR FIFTEEN YEARS.

Lest there are those however, in whose minds the very stubborn facts adduced in the foregoing, have not caused a doubt as to the efficacy of "free food," we will deal with the question from another and equally effective viewpoint. Why is it, we will ask Sir Wilfrid Laurier that increases of twenty, fifty, or even one hundred per cent in the price of food products have taken place during the last ten or fifteen years, without there being any increase in the customs duties?

For a quarter of a century past, and more, there has been no increase in the tariff rates on food-stuffs. As a matter of fact within that time there have been reductions, and Sir Wilfrid Laurier himself makes the claim that he made reductions in 1897, but instead of food prices being reduced, they have steadily advanced during the past fifteen years.

Here are the "index numbers" as found in "Wholesale Prices in Canada," a publication issued by the Department of Labour:—

Year.	Index Number.
1896	92.5
1897	92.2
1900	108.2
1906	120.0
1907	126.2
1908	120.8
1909	121.2
1910	124.0
1911	127.3

The Fallacy of "Free Food" Exposed

CUSTOMS DUTIES NOT THE CAUSE.

Here we find a general increase in the cost of living of thirty-five points, in fourteen years—a period in which there certainly were no increases in the tariff, with the slight exception of a small increase on biscuits, these being then manufactured by Hon. William Paterson, Laurier's Minister of Customs.

In face of the indisputable fact that while for fifteen years we have had a stationary tariff but continuously increasing prices, will any man be so blinded by partizanship as to say that the increased cost of living depends upon what Sir Wilfrid is pleased to call "Food Taxes"?

Is it not manifest to anyone possessed of the least understanding that food prices have some principle of growth quite apart from the Customs Tariff?

At the present time it is quite natural that the people should ask Sir Wilfrid Laurier why it was that in the fifteen years that he held office he did not abolish the duties, and lower the price of food-stuffs? If this question had been put to Sir Wilfrid Laurier at any time before his defeat in 1911, we can be morally certain that he would have replied something like this: "I lowered the tariff on food-stuffs in 1897, and so far from the cost of living having gone down from that date, it has steadily gone up, and it is therefore manifest to me that it is vain to expect relief from a further lowering of the tariff."

That would have constituted a perfectly sound and logical answer in 1911, and it constitutes a perfectly sound and logical answer to the "Free Fooders" contentions now.

EVEN IF TARIFF IS REDUCED THERE IS NO CHEAP FOOD AVAILABLE

But even if we concede a single merit to Sir Wilfrid's policy, and admit that there is just the least possible chance

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of the tariff bearing some slight relation to the high price of food-stuffs, we are still in the dark as to the value of his policy, for we cannot perceive how he is going to snap his fingers at the natural laws of trade, and world-wide conditions, and buy, and import cheap food into Canada, when there is no cheap food outside Canada to buy. The high cost of living is not confined to Canada alone. It obtains in every clime, and beneath every flag.

Where then, will Sir Wilfrid get low priced food?

Not from the United States, for the people of that country are not going to buy food-stuffs from us at high prices, and ship them back to us at low prices. They abolished the tariff to get cheap food. They cannot be in a position to sell it.

Not from England, or from Scotland, or Ireland, for the British Isles import their food, and it is heavily taxed even under "Free Trade."

Not from New Zealand, for there too, they have a high cost of living problem.

Not from Australia, for the cost of living is high throughout the Antipodes.

Not from the South American Republics for Uncle Sam has found to his sorrow that "Free Food" has not enabled him to buy cheap food there, and he is more advantageously situated to trade with South America than we are.

Not from the "Favored Nations," for did not Sir Wilfrid solemnly assure us in 1911 that these nations could not sell us anything that could possibly compete with anything produced by the Canadian farmer?

From whence, then, would Sir Wilfrid draw his supply of cheap food for the workingman's dinner table?

Great is "Free Food." And great is the credulity of him who would believe that "free food" would give us cheaper food.

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FOOD TAXES NOT A BURDEN

Chief among the catch phrases being used by the Liberals and "Free Fooders" to enlist the sympathy of the unwary voter for Sir Wilfrid's latest Free Trade cure-all, is that so often heard in the mouths of Free Trade theorists about "the burden of food taxes." Driven from their position that "free food" would lower the cost of living, by plain ordinary common sense, and the whole teachings of fiscal science, they fall back upon the feeble contention that their latest policy would at any rate lift "the burden of food taxation" from the people.

Such specious reasoning can deceive none but those who wish to be deceived. The slightest attempt at analysis will discover the falsity; and these errors have been repeatedly pointed out ever since the fallacy of free trade first raised up its head.

For a moment we will examine this contention of the Liberals and "Free Fooders" that we are "groaning" as they say, under "the burden of food taxation."

Meats, poultry, eggs, fish, dairy products, and bread-stuffs, are the commodities which go to make up the dinner table of the average Canadian, and they form the fairest possible test of the extent to which our food is taxed.

WHAT THE CONSUMER ACTUALLY PAYS

IN TAXES ON FOOD

In 1913 the amount of duty collected on meats and poultry brought into Canada, totalled \$1,040,547. If you divide this among the population of Canada—which is eight millions—you will find that this terrible taxation of meat under which Canadians are supposed to groan, amounted to the insignificant sum of thirteen cents per head, for a whole year—the price of one-half pound of beef-steak.

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Now let us see how much we were "taxed" for eggs. The duty collected on eggs imported during the fiscal year 1913 amounted to \$327,123. Divide that among eight million persons, and you will be startled to find that all this "groaning" about this particular "tax" was over the payment of a fraction over four cents per head, for a whole year—the price at present of less than one egg.

We will next take butter. The total duty collected on butter imported into Canada during the fiscal year 1913 was \$252,311. Divide that amount among the population of the country, and it amounts to what?—the "crushing" sum of three cents per head, for a year.

What about fish? On fish we paid duty to the amount of \$361,116. Divide that among eight millions and it amounts to four cents per head.

Lastly we will take breadstuffs. Duty collected on breadstuffs, imported last year amounted to \$261,403. Divide that among eight millions and you will be surprised to find that this "crushing burden" actually amounted to a fraction more than three cents per head for the whole year.

THE BURDEN OF THIRTY CENTS.

As a matter of fact the total duty collected upon the importation of all these food-stuffs, for the year, when divided among the country's population, amounted to about thirty cents per head—and this is the "terrible food tax," that the Liberals would have us "groan" under, in order to bolster up their case for "free food."

In Great Britain where they have a so-called "free trade" tariff, the duty collected on food-stuffs last year amounted to nearly \$350,000,000, or nearly eight dollars for every man, woman and child, in the United Kingdom.

Let the Canadian consumer ponder over these few facts; and as he reflects upon this "food tax" mythology of Laurierism, he will be inclined to groan—not for the consumer but for the fatuity of the Liberal party in accepting such a fallacy.

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LAURIER'S LATEST THEORY A BLOW AT THE NATIONAL POLICY.

It has been shown beyond reasonable doubt that the theory of the tariff being a factor in the high cost of living is false to facts, false to the teachings of fiscal science, and false to the fundamentals of sound economics; it has been shown conclusively that the high cost of living is world wide and that even if a tariff never existed it would be impossible for Laurier to import cheap food under existing conditions for the simple reason that there is no cheap food to buy; it has been shown by plain figures and facts that all this talk about "free food" raising from our shoulders the "burden of food taxation" is the merest cant, for the simple reason that this so-called "crushing" food taxation, is a Laurier myth, a befogging mist that dissolves before facts, like figment shadows before the morning breeze. We will now endeavor to prove that not only is this false policy of "Free Food" wholly and absolutely useless to effect the purpose for which it is supposed to have been conceived, but that it is really fraught with great danger, constituting as it does, an attack on the National Policy, under the guise and in the name of reform in the interests of those, who would be the greatest sufferers from the dire consequences with which it is pregnant.

"FREE FOOD" MEANS "FREE TRADE."

"Free food" means free trade in natural products, and free trade in natural products means the removal of the very corner stone of the super-structure of adequate and reasonable protection to every Canadian industry. If you refuse to protect the farmer from outside competition, how long is the farmer going to agree to the protection of our manufacturers. How long will he remain content to sell in an unprotected market, and buy in a protected market? The

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National Policy aimed first of all to benefit the farmer and the workingman. It proposed to benefit them, and it has benefitted them, by causing industries to be built up throughout the country, thus creating a demand for labour, and a home market for the farmer. This policy has been successful. It has given the farmer a home market. It has made this half of this northern continent a hive of industry, and it has made the Canadian workingman the most contented, the most happy, and the highest paid in the world. To prove this, it is not necessary to lean upon illusive statistics. We have a certain and infallible proof in the movement of population. Labour never knowingly goes from a place of high wages to a place of low wages. The fact that men of all races, creeds and sects are pouring into this country at an unprecedented rate shows where wages are highest, where opportunity is greatest, and where the standard of living is best. That the leader of a political party that attributes to itself patriotic motives, would strike at the heart of the policy which is responsible for this happiness and prosperity of our people, is almost beyond belief. Yet this is precisely what is meant by the proposed abolition of the tariff on natural products. For there is not a shadow of a doubt that free trade in natural products, would sooner or later be followed by free trade in everything.

WHERE THE REAL DANGER LIES TO THE CANADIAN WORKINGMAN.

Herein lies the danger for the Canadian workingman. Under Free Trade our industries would have to compete with the cheap labour in the factories of Europe, and with low standards of Asiatic and European living. How long could they operate under such conditions? How long would it be before they would be compelled to close their doors? Free Trade theorists in the Liberal party tell us that the National Policy is not responsible for high wages in Canada, because the price of labour is dependent upon the law of supply and demand.

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But if the policy of an adequate protective tariff built up industries in this country and created a demand for labour, and that demand fostered high wages it is manifest to anyone that the National Policy must be given the credit, after all. It therefore behooves the young men of today, and especially those who depend for their livelihood, upon the honest toil of their hands, to meet and combat this latest Free Trade heresy. They must combat it because it constitutes an attack upon the policy that has made Canada the most contented and prosperous country upon the face of the earth; and because if adopted it means for them eventually, low wages, and lower standards of living.

FOUR TIMES IN THE PAST HAVE SIMILAR ATTACKS BEEN REPELLED.

Four times in the past have the farmer, the workingman, and the manufacturer stood shoulder to shoulder, and repelled the attacks of the Free Traders upon the citadel of the National Policy. By promises of cheap food, the workingman must not now be beguiled into the camp of the common enemy. The great interests of the nation are so united and inseparable, that agriculturists, artisans, and manufacturers will prosper together or languish together. Any legislation that will visit injury upon one, is dangerous to the others.

The question of the high cost of living is one that challenges the best consideration of any government. No party has the right to make of it a stepping stone to political power. But if it must be made a political issue, for its solution, then the people must choose between a party on the one hand, that for more than thirty years has been buffeted about by the waves of every known economic and tariff heresy; and a party on the other hand that has ever been consistent in its economic teachings; the party which gave us the National Policy—the bed-rock, upon which rests our national prosperity.

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